



EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

March 2010

Graduation at Kabul Education University Marks a New Era:

On March 10, 2010, 41 students in Kabul celebrated their graduation from Master's of Education (MEd) programs, made possible due to support from the U.S. Government. Almost half the graduates earned their degrees from Kabul Education University, while the others studied abroad at Indiana University or the University of Massachusetts.

The graduates are professors of education from around Afghanistan. The increased number of faculty members with advanced degrees will help revitalize the quality of teaching in education departments throughout the country. Fifty percent of the MEd graduates are female, which is a major breakthrough for Afghan universities, where women were banned from working and studying during the Taliban period.



U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry presents a graduate with her diploma.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

More than three hundred people attended the event, including U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, who said it was a "truly historic occasion" and that education would "contribute to making Afghanistan and the world a much better place for everyone."

The graduation marked both the end of two years of hard work for the proud students and the beginning of an effort to improve the quality of education for future teachers in Afghan schools.



A school management committee member addresses students at the school opening ceremony in Nowyab village.

PHOTO: USAID/PACE-A

Communities Across Afghanistan Celebrate the Start of the New School Year:

In late March, USAID-supported community-based classes celebrated the start of a new school year with the enrollment of more than 40,000 male and female students in 2,000 classes throughout the country.

School opening ceremonies were held in most of the communities. In Nowyab village in Parwan province, female members of the school management committee, children, and their parents held a celebration for the entire community. Village elders spoke about the importance of education and placed emphasis on increasing female participation in educational activities.

EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

"I am very pleased that once again I have the opportunity to attend my class, meet classmates, and learn. I hope one day, each and every Afghan girl will have the opportunity to go to school for as many years as she wants," stated student Gul Cheen.

New Research Provides Insight into Student Politics: In late 2009, USAID funded the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) to study the role that student politics play within the larger political sphere. The recently published research paper gives a historical picture of Afghan student politics from the 1960s until today and connects these student movements to the development of political parties in Afghanistan.

The research is based upon approximately 100 interviews with students and political activists in Kabul, Hirat, Mazari Sharif, and Jalalabad, as well as interviews with former student activists from the 1960s and 1970s. Some of the key findings of the study include:

- The number of students actively involved in "rebellious" activities is much lower than in 2001, although it is gradually rising.
- The first signs of radicalism have started to appear among non-Pashtun students. However, only a very small numbers of educated Afghans and recent university graduates have been involved in anti-government activities to date.
- Afghan Government recognition of youth activist organizations as legitimate civil society groups will help strengthen democracy.

The full report is available online at <http://www.areu.org.af/> under "Latest Publications."



Ministry of Education Drafts Anti-corruption Policy: Combating corruption is a top priority for the Afghan and U.S. governments. A letter issued from President Karzai's office in January 2010 instructed all ministries to design strategies to eliminate corruption, and the Ministry of Education's (MoE) Human Resources Department established a committee to draft an anti-corruption policy for its department. USAID's Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) project provided technical assistance and supported the process.



The anti-corruption committee drafts its policy, supported by technical assistance from USAID.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

The committee, consisting of four high-ranking officials from the Human Resources Department, formulated two documents: "Anti-Corruption Policy and Implementation Plan for the MoE's Human Resources Department" and "Procedures to Review Complaints of All MoE Personnel." The new policies and procedures will take effect after review by the general director of Human Resources Department and approval by the minister of education.

EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

The new policies will help the Human Resources Department to tackle corruption effectively and to establish a work environment that ensures fairness for all employees. One member of the Human Resources Department, eager to see the new policy take effect, stated, “Corruption is a very unprofessional act; the strict enforcement of this policy will make employees realize that corruption is not acceptable in the workplace anymore. The procedure to review complaints will provide an opportunity for employees to stand for their rights.”

New Ideas for Teaching Science: Science instruction in Afghanistan has been reenergized thanks to a USAID-supported professional development program for university education science faculty members. “Injecting Inquiry into the Classroom” is one of a series of science seminars that uses active experimentation and gives participants first-hand knowledge of how to make science fun by using local materials. The videos, which are filmed in U.S. classrooms, dubbed into Dari, and subtitled in Pashto, are also used to show how active lessons benefit learners and trainers.



Science professors at Kabul Education University use the outdoor environment to find creative ways to teach science.

PHOTO: Fiona Rowand

In the most recent round of seminars, 201 science professors (64 women) from 17 faculties of education across the country received training in 11 workshops. The previous round, which included professors from Kabul, Paktya, and Kandahar, ran in late February.

Participants from Kabul Education University used the university grounds to look for ways to turn their surrounding environment into research ideas. One participant commented, “Before this seminar, we saw science teaching as simply transferring knowledge, but now we see it as a continuous process of discovery.”

High School Subject Study Guides Help Teachers Earn Diplomas: USAID’s Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) project will launch an accelerated learning program for Afghan teachers this spring. The program will offer an opportunity for teachers who did not complete secondary school to earn a high school diploma.

To prepare for the program launch, BESST held a workshop to draft study guides for the program, led by a consultant from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Afghan experts in all subjects joined the consultant and BESST education officers in an intensive process involving group work and peer feedback to produce 80 one-page topic explanations.

These secondary school-level study guides cover subject areas such as math, science, language arts, and social sciences. The guides will be used by teachers in small-group tutoring sessions and in self study to help them develop the content knowledge, and academic skills needed to obtain a secondary school diploma.



Afghan education experts write accelerated learning study guides.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

“For years, many Afghan teachers were hoping to get the opportunity to participate in an accelerated learning program. Now their dreams are coming true,” said Suhaila Tanha, Dari language expert and writing workshop participant. Ms. Tanha added, “The other good thing about this workshop is that the material we developed is based on the actual subject and methodological needs of Afghan educators.”



AUAF students mingle with members of Kabul Dreams.

PHOTO: Mohammad Shariq

The American University of Afghanistan Rocks for Charity: On March 4, 2010, the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) hosted quite possibly the first ever rock-and-roll concert on an Afghan college campus. The concert was organized by the AUAF Music Club as a fundraiser to benefit children and families in Kabul-area settlements. Ticket proceeds of more than \$1,800 were used to buy blankets for internally displaced persons.

The concert was sponsored in part by Kabul Rock Radio, 108 FM, Afghanistan’s only rock-and-roll radio station, and its parent the Killid Media Group (TKG), a non-profit independent media initiative of

Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA). TKG promotes civic engagement, free speech, and open discourse in Afghanistan and strengthens the press as an independent source of information for Afghans.

The concert was broadcast live on Kabul Rock Radio. It opened with traditional Afghan music played by world-renowned artists from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture section of the Aga Khan Development Network. The Aga Khan musicians were followed by the only all-Afghan rock-and-roll band, Kabul Dreams, which includes AUAF students. The AUAF Music Club plans to organize similar events in the future to allow the AUAF community to enjoy time together while raising money for charity.

Kabul Medical University Encourages Health Promotion: In Afghanistan, increased preventative healthcare could save many lives and lead to a healthier population. Recently, USAID sponsored a health promotion workshop at Kabul Medical University, tailored to medical school professors, nursing faculty, and NGO staff. Participants from five provinces discussed how to raise community awareness, increase commitment to preventative health care, and improve women’s health. Workshop moderators used case studies and examples of common health interventions in Afghan communities to engage participants in the discussion.



Participants discuss community health promotion public policy.

PHOTO: David Foster

Participants commented that the workshop was “very useful and something new for our country.” The workshop content, tailored to the Afghan context, will be made available to

EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

the participants for use in teaching their own students. Additional five-day courses are planned on relevant public health topics, such as nutrition and research methodology.



A presenter answers questions during one of the Grand Rounds discussions in Kabul.

PHOTO: USAID/HEP

Grand Rounds Discussions Enrich Kabul Medical Community: Lacking exposure to the latest medical trends and techniques in their specialty areas, medical professors in Afghanistan often teach using outdated curriculum and materials. Fortunately, the USAID-funded Higher Education Project is addressing this problem through Grand Rounds discussions.

Grand Rounds are presentations of current trends in medicine followed by an interactive question-and-answer session with the audience. More than 140 doctors, midwives, nurses, and medical students attended the first discussions held in three teaching hospitals in Kabul. Two hospitals held presentations

on preventing and managing heart disease, while the third focused on clinical care in the management of diabetes.

These discussions provided an opportunity for approximately 50 healthcare clinicians with international experience to engage with the medical community in Afghanistan. Participants found the rounds motivating and closely related to the medical challenges they face every day. They also requested additional presentations on surgery, radiology, and anesthesiology.

Building the Knowledge and Skills of Secondary School Teachers:

This March, USAID's Building Education Support Systems for Teachers (BESST) project held a workshop in Kabul to develop an accelerated learning program for teachers. The accelerated learning program will offer an opportunity for existing teachers who have completed grades 6 through 11 to study and gain the knowledge required to complete a secondary education and, eventually, enroll in a teacher training college.

The workshop participants developed test questions for subjects taught in grades 7 to 12. These test questions will be used in exams to determine whether teachers have the required knowledge of secondary school subjects to qualify for entry into teacher training colleges. Workshop organizers optimistically expected to generate 3,000 questions from the workshop, but ended up developing 7,000 test questions. Organizers attributed the success to excellent support from the Ministry of Education (MoE) Teacher Education Department and the hard work of the 62 participants. The participants included officials from the MoE Curriculum Department, teacher training colleges, high school teachers, and university professors. Participants worked together in teams to check the accuracy and clarity of the questions.



Afghan education experts participate in a test question writing workshop.

PHOTO: USAID/BESST

EDUCATION PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

“This workshop reached the target and now there are enough questions for different subjects for grades 7-12. We really appreciate BESST’s cooperation to develop such workshops and trainings,” commented an experienced staff member from the MoE Curriculum Department. With the support of USAID, the MoE is taking steps toward developing a system to assess the knowledge and skills of high school teachers.

Masters in Public Policy and Administration Program Educates Afghanistan’s Reformers: In Afghanistan, mid-career professionals have few opportunities to earn advanced degrees in their field. To address this gap, Kabul University established a Masters in Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) program. The professional program teaches the tools of governance – including formulating, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs. The program targets rising leaders from a diverse range of ministries and organizations, including the Ministry of Public Health, the Office of the President, and NGOs and development organizations. After passing 10 rigorous courses, students write a master’s thesis and defend their work before professors, fellow students, and university administrators.

On March 14, two degree candidates successfully defended their theses, entitled "The Impact of Adult Training Methodology on the Civil Service Commission of Afghanistan" and "The National Assembly's Contribution Towards Democracy." Candidates conducted original research after completing their coursework and a study abroad program at the University of Washington. To date, 12 students have completed the program.

Graduates use their enhanced professional skills to improve the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s capacity in project planning, financial management, program administration, and organizational leadership. MPPA candidate Mohammad Sharif Samsor emphasized the importance of professional education in rebuilding Afghanistan, stating, “I am sure the skills, the knowledge, and the experiences offered to me by the MPPA program will allow me to contribute to the rebuilding, rehabilitation, and renovation processes of my homeland. I feel that I am on the right path.”